United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 12, 2012

The Honorable Regina Benjamin
Surgeon General
United States Public Health Service
Tower Building
Plaza Level 1, Room 100
1101 Wooton Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Admiral Benjamin:

As obesity continues to plague our children, we request that you study the impact sugary beverages have on obesity and public health in the United States, and how policies regarding sugary beverages might affect the obesity epidemic.

America's historically high obesity rates are creating a public health crisis. Two thirds of adults and one-third of children are overweight or obese. America's childhood overweight and obesity rate is among the highest of any country in the world, and this rate has more than doubled over the last four decades. People who are obese are at higher risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and even certain types of cancer. Sadly, obesity-related conditions kill more than 110,000 Americans every year. With so many people overweight or obese, 25 percent of young men and women in this country are too overweight to serve in the military.

As America's waistline has expanded, so too has our access to sugary drinks. Beverages like soda, sports drinks, lemonade, juice drinks, and sweetened teas are cheap and available everywhere. Doctors and public health experts recommend limiting and reducing the consumption of sugary drinks, especially in children, but kids and adults drink twice the amount of soda that they did three decades ago.

Local communities have begun to debate and implement policies related to sugary beverages in hopes of decreasing rates of obesity. We request that you conduct a study and determine the impact of sugary drinks on rates of American obesity and whether public health proposals that target sugary beverages will positively impact public health.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Lautenberg
FRANK R. LAUTENBERG

Ron Wyden
RON WYDEN

Richard Blumenthal
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL